

MONTE BAR

The majestic view sweeps over the Lugano area with the gulf and the city of Lugano and, in the background, the renowned Monte San Salvatore and - to the south - the fascinating Denti della Vecchia, rising limestone masts of this region's Prealps. But it also extends over the Po Valley as far as Milan and even Monviso.

The site is an ark of naturalistic curiosities. During the last ice age, the ice level did not exceed an altitude of 1200 metres. It was therefore not the ice that shaped the valley but rather the flow of water and the erosion exerted by atmospheric agents. The mountains remained free from the deadly grip of the ice and this allowed the survival of many animal and plant organisms: a real Noah's Ark. We therefore find on the ridge between Caval Drossa and Gazzirola, along the cycle route, even species that lived before the ice ages! In addition, a large number of Alpine species found hospitality on these peaks emerging from the sea of ice. Today, we can meet alpine and arctic species alongside southern species.

Numerous carvings can be observed on the outcropping rocks, on both the landslide and on the erratic boulders scattered on the slopes of Monte Bar: cupels, channels, crosses, footprints, menhirs, alignments and cromlechs. Man has always felt the need to mark the space in which he lived in order to attribute particular connotations and properties through a system of signs recognised and shared by the whole community. These fascinating signs engraved on the stones, arouse interest and raise questions because they are shrouded in an aura of mystery.

All this is available at the site of the mountain hut Capanna Monte Bar, lying at an altitude of 1600 metres on the panoramic south-facing pastures, it can undoubtedly be considered the most beautiful terrace from which to admire the Lugano area, the Prealps, the Apennines with the Monviso triangle, Monte Rosa and the peaks of the Ticino Alps. Accessible all year round, it offers spectacular and unforgettable sunsets and fiery skies of incredible beauty.

The Monte Bar area has been the subject of important forestry measures for the safety of the territory.

In fact, in 1876, following serious flood events caused by the indiscriminate exploitation of the forests, the Grand Council finally decided to apply a new forestry law. From this moment on, thanks to the financial participation of the Swiss Confederation, which effectively took over the supervision of all mountain forests in Switzerland, the first forestry projects began.

Monte Bar was once covered with the same thick vegetation that the surrounding mountains still are today. Some areas were deforested for sheep-farming, but it was mainly after the second half of the 19th century that the present treeless appearance was created.

In the nineteenth century the valley's communities seriously affected their woodland heritage for many reasons: the valley's population was mainly devoted to sheep farming and consequently believed they had every interest in enlarging the pasture area, to the detriment of the area covered by the forest; during the nineteenth century the demand for coal only increased and finally industrial development also stimulated the demand for timber.

Another chapter in the history of Monte Bar is that of the "Sherpas from Ticino", the carriers of Bidogno, strong women used to carrying everything on their shoulders. In 1936 during the construction of the first hut, they transported the material needed by the men at the construction site with panniers. Once the hut was built, they continued to climb the mountain to carry the skis of wealthy Lugano residents.